

"Tourism -- The Yukon and Alaska"

Address given at
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By

Kenneth F. Friske

S P E E C H

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When asked to speak on tourism in the Yukon, I found myself thinking how comparable it was to tourism in Alaska, the problems, the possibilities and most of all, the distinct relationship between the Yukon and Alaska in the promotion and marketing of a vacation-land that cannot be found any other place in the world -- The Spell of the Yukon -- The Trail of '98 -- The Klondike -- Eldorado Creek -- Dawson City -- Fairbanks -- The Arctic Circle and the land of the midnight sun -- towering mountains, sprawling glaciers, fjords, unsurpassed fishing and hunting, Sourdoughs, Eskimos, and Indians -- these are a few of the great attractions of our two lands.

These are the attractions that every year thrill more and more visitors who are looking for a vacation in a new land -- the "frontierland" which offers the naturalness of its outdoor beauties along with the open honesty of its people. But - we can do more to attract more people! We have to do more to compete in the highly competitive world travel market.

Travel is an industry -- not because its members produce similar products or provide similar services, but because they share the same customer -- the traveler. One of industry's richest possibilities in Canada and the United States today is the travel industry. Offering a tremendous potential for aggressive marketing, the travel market is one of the least exploited. This is particularly true of tourism in the Yukon and the State of Alaska.

One of the greatest challenges we face is to gain a bigger share of the disposable income, the discretionary spending power, of the consumer. We must "fight" against other tourist hungry areas for our share of the travel dollar. Tourists are like any other commodity -- you have to buy them.

It has been recognized by the Canadian Government Travel Bureau that the United States (the lower 48 we call them) is the biggest travel market in the world and will always be. With a continuing expanding economy and with more disposable income for travel, millions more are taking trips each year and are prospects for vacations in the Yukon and Alaska. In the United States for example, an estimated 96.4 million people took some sort of a domestic holiday or business trip during 1961. They spent in the neighborhood of sixteen billion dollars for transportation, accommodations, food, recreation, clothing and equipment. In this same year it is estimated that Canada as a whole - I have no information on the Yukon - received approximately \$482,000,000, and Alaska the infinitesimal amount of fifty million dollars of tourist revenues.

The Yukon and Alaska must face up to the challenge. Continued and increased tourist prosperity can only be sustained through increased promotion, improved facilities and protection of an area's image through visitor satisfaction.

Because travel represents such a big stake to so many companies and individual interests, continued research is being conducted on the attitudes of U.S. travelers. According to a survey just completed by the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center, it was found that the most consistent influence on travel habits is income. Income and long-range travel were virtually inseparable -

regardless of the mode of transportation. The people who take more long-distance air trips also take more long-distance surface trips. Furthermore, the over \$15,000.00 income group, tiny in number compared to other categories - accounts for a huge and steadily increasing percentage of total trips. According to another survey, Americans would rather spend money for travel than for any other item brought within discretionary income. More people would prefer to spend a \$2,000.00 gift on travel than on such things as home improvements, expenditures for children, investments, cars, home purchases or luxury items.

Today's traveler is a sophisticated one, experienced in buying and bringing a great deal of selectivity to bear on his purchases. Marketing men, catering to the new traveler, place a great deal of emphasis on the demands made by the consumer, and are tailoring their travel packages to his needs.

As our economy continues to climb, the "sensible price" traveler becomes more and more a rarity - people are spending more and demand more. Today's tourist feels he needs more than just a clean room with a bed - he wants a larger room, clean modern and ample furnishings in addition to a facility offering coffee shop, cocktail lounge and restaurant. The public today, expects and demands fast courteous service. This standard of business conduct should be established at all of our hotels serving tourists. More effort should be given to developing a more "favorable tourist climate". The impression we make on tourists is of great advertising value and I believe that many tourists leave the Yukon and Alaska with the wrong impression simply because they have not been accorded "professional treatment".

A high occupancy ratio at a popular destination generates overcrowding, necessitates the use of substandard accommodations, disappointment and discontent among tourists and their travel agents. Last year, as in past years, the lack of hotel capacity was the biggest problem of the travel industry in the Yukon and Alaska. Lack of hotels is one of the big obstacles in the path of increased tourism development in our two areas at this time. To help overcome this obstacle, our company this past season invested several hundred thousand dollars at Beaver Creek, Yukon Territory, at Alaskon Border Lodge, making it what we consider the finest facility on the Alaska Highway, and an important factor in the economic development of this area of the Yukon. In Fairbanks, bids are coming in on the expansion of our Fairbanks Inn hotel facility which will make it the most modern and largest in terms of rooms with bath north of the Alaska range, as well as the first particularly tourist hotel in the Yukon or Alaska. It is designed to meet the demand for first-class accommodations as required in today's highly competitive travel market.

Canada's earnings from tourism are second only to newsprint. In Alaska tourism has climbed to the number three industry and will soon go on higher. Economically it is even more dramatic when it is realized that every dollar spent in a tourist area by a visitor will result in at least 3.2 dollars in economic activity during a twelve month period. This is based upon the "multiplier principal" as it applies to money in circulation in a given area. If there is new money added to the economy, it begins an independent circulation in a sense. Tourist money can only be classed as "new" money. Thus the true impact of the tourist industry on a local economy is found by multiplying tourist expenditures by 3.2. By taking approximately 10% of this total, a sound minimum estimate of tax revenues for the area can be arrived at.

A nation-wide "Project Hospitality" has been started by the Canadian Tourist Association to raise the standards of visitor reception and care. "Project Hospitality" will consist of a series of seminars held across Canada for people in the tourist industry, assistance to provincial and regional tourist associations, vocational training and supplying personnel for all facets of the tourist industry. Other important subjects to be covered will be methods for training staff in tourist establishments, and obtaining new personnel from high schools and universities for the tourist industry.

In Alaska, people associated with the tourist industry have formed the Alaska Travel Promotion Association, a nonprofit organization to foster and promote travel to and within Alaska and to encourage the increase and improvement of tourist facilities and attractions throughout the state. In addition, this group works very closely with the State of Alaska Travel Division through that division's very able director, Morris Ford. During the past two years ATPA working with the Alaska State Chamber of Commerce and local chambers of commerce, has conducted "Tour Host Schools" in the principal cities of Alaska to acquaint and familiarize interested people in each area with the tourist industry.

The Yukon and Alaska have common interest with other tourist areas of the Pacific Northwest and Western Canada. At a meeting last fall in Jasper, of the Pacific Northwest Trade Association, it was determined that all of the tourist interests of the Pacific Northwest, Western Canada and Alaska should join hands in developing a "common market" theme. I would like to encourage the Yukon and the State of Alaska to move forward in offering to cooperate with each others tourist associations and organizations in a joint venture concerning the mutual promotion of tourism in our common area.

We must attempt to expand our tourist season -- to take advantage of the more than three months of good travel weather which is available in the Yukon and Alaska. Historically tourists have followed the custom of taking vacations in July and August rather than in early and later periods of the summer. It is estimated that a quarter of the population of the Western World is not affected by school holidays and could go on vacation at any time. Indeed, it has been found that while many of these people do, in fact, take a trip in the early or late part of the year, the larger portion of them have been unable to break the habit of taking a holiday in the high season as well. This season can be expanded by the introduction of Thrift Rates, offering price as an attraction. This has proven successful in the operations of Alaska Cruise Lines, Ltd., between Vancouver and Skagway during the months of May and September, when the ships have been operating at full capacity and in months of the year which were never before thought saleable to the general public. All tourist interests, principally hotels and transportation companies, should cooperate in the offering of special inducements in the way of price to tourists coming early and later periods. In addition, the Department of Travel and Publicity of the Yukon, the Alaska Travel Division and the tourists interests should be geared to selling the advantages of spring and fall travel both from the standpoint of price and favorable climatic conditions.

The Yukon and Alaska are a huge treasure house of wonders for the tourist, but will have to push their "product" to cash in

on tourism. The lack of suitable hotel facilities, more and better eating, service and entertainment facilities must be overcome if our tourist industry is to grow. More well-equipped campsites and better highways are needed if we are to attract the average tourist from selecting another area for his vacation.

Visitors on vacation are looking for a new experience in travel and flavor. The Yukon and Alaska are different! Let us emphasize and preserve the atmosphere and flavor which the tourist is looking for and which he expects to find here on the "last frontier".

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